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Tales of Yudhishtira

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RETOLD FROM THE MAHABHARATA

Yudhishthira, the eldest of the five Pandava princes, was born to Kunti by the grace of Yama. His actions were free from passion and prejudice. He came to be considered the very embodiment of Dharma and was respectfully referred to as Dharmaraja.

Yama, the awe-inspiring God of death, is also revered as the Lord of Justice. According to Hindu belief, all living beings reap the fruit of their actions after death. Yama administers justice to all the beings brought before him. Since he metes out justice strictly according to *Dharma*, he is called Yamadharma. Who else could test Yudhishthira but Yamadharma? Yudhishthira emerged from the ordeals a stronger soul.



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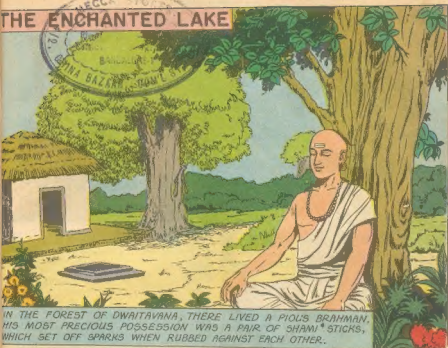
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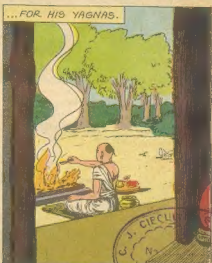
THE ENCHANTED LAKE



HE USED THESE STICKS TO LIGHT THE FIRE...

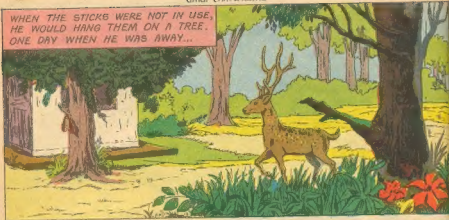


...FOR HIS YAGNAS.



SHAMI* WOOD WAS USED FOR KINDLING THE YAGNA OR SACRIFICIAL FIRE.

WHEN THE STICKS WERE NOT IN USE,
HE WOULD HANG THEM ON A TREE.
ONE DAY WHEN HE WAS AWAY...



...A DEER CAME UP TO THE TREE AND
PLAYFULLY BUTTED THE STICKS...



...AND THEY GOT ENTANGLED IN
ITS ANTLERS.

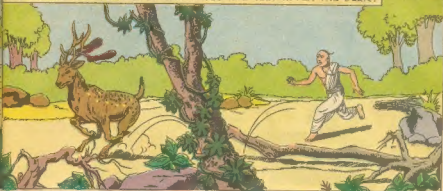


LATER, WHEN THE BRAHMAN
RETURNED TO HIS COTTAGE—

MY
STICKS!



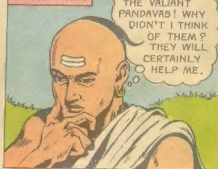
HE DROPPED THE BUNDLE OF DRY TWIGS AND RAN AFTER THE DEER.



BUT THE BRAHMAN, WHO WAS NO MATCH FOR THE SWIFT ANIMAL, SOON HAD TO GIVE UP THE CHASE.



AS HE TURNED TO GO BACK TO HIS HERMITAGE, A THOUGHT SUDDENLY STRUCK HIM.



THE PANDAVA PRINCES, WHO HAD LOST THEIR KINGDOM TO THEIR WILY COUSINS, WERE NOW LIVING IN EXILE WITH THEIR WIFE, DRAUPADI.



WHEN THE BRAHMAN STOOD BEFORE THEM, YUDHISHTHIRA, THE ELDEST PANDAVA, WAS THE FIRST TO SPEAK.

O KING, ONLY YOU CAN SAVE ME!

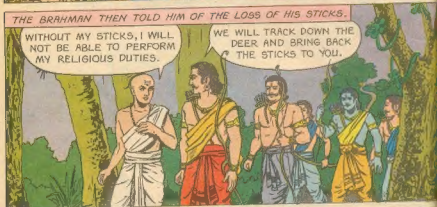
WELCOME TO OUR HERMITAGE! IS THERE ANYTHING WE CAN DO FOR YOU?



THE BRAHMAN THEN TOLD HIM OF THE LOSS OF HIS STICKS.

WITHOUT MY STICKS, I WILL NOT BE ABLE TO PERFORM MY RELIGIOUS DUTIES.

WE WILL TRACK DOWN THE DEER AND BRING BACK THE STICKS TO YOU.



THE PANDAVAS SET OUT. FOR A WHILE THEY HAD NO LUCK. THEN SUDDENLY—

DEER TRACKS! LET US FOLLOW THEM.



AT LAST, FAR, FAR AWAY FROM THEIR HERMITAGE—

LOOK! THE DEER!



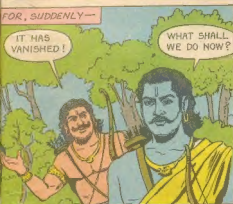
THE PANDAVAS CHASED THE DEER
AND SHOT AT IT, BUT IN VAIN.



FOR, SUDDENLY—

IT HAS
VANISHED!

WHAT SHALL
WE DO NOW?



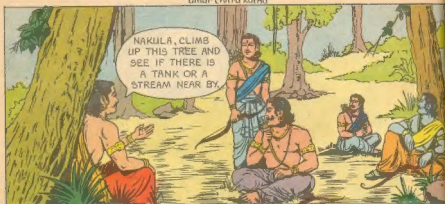
WE MUST
FIND IT
AGAIN. LET
US CONTINUE
THE HUNT.



I AM TIRED,
HUNGRY AND
THIRSTY.

THEN LET US
REST BEFORE
WE GO ON.





HE RUSHED TO THE LAKE.

WAIT! THIS LAKE BELONGS TO ME. YOU MAY DRINK FROM IT ONLY AFTER YOU ANSWER MY QUESTIONS.

NAKULA LOOKED AROUND. THERE WAS NO ONE IN SIGHT.

WHO COULD IT BE?

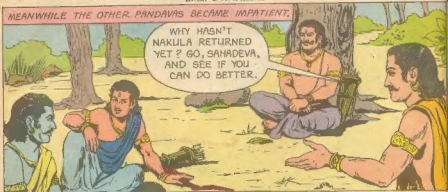
I'LL FIND OUT AFTER I HAVE ...

...QUENCHED MY THIRST.

THE NEXT MOMENT HE FELL DEAD.

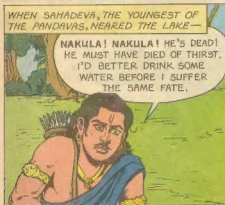
MEANWHILE THE OTHER PANDAVAS BECAME IMPATIENT.

WHY HASN'T NAKULA RETURNED YET? GO, SAHADEVA, AND SEE IF YOU CAN DO BETTER.



WHEN SAHADEVA, THE YOUNGEST OF THE PANDAVAS, NEARED THE LAKE—

NAKULA! NAKULA! HE'S DEAD! HE MUST HAVE DIED OF THIRST. I'D BETTER DRINK SOME WATER BEFORE I SUFFER THE SAME FATE.



I OWN THIS LAKE. IF YOU DRINK WITHOUT FIRST ANSWERING MY QUESTIONS, YOU TOO WILL FALL DEAD.



BUT SAHADEVA HARDLY HEARD HIM.



AND HE TOO FELL DEAD.



THEN CAME ARJUNA, THE THIRD OF THE PANDAVAS HE CAME IN SEARCH OF HIS BROTHERS.

NAKULA! SAHADEVA!
HOW WHO HAS DONE
THIS VILE DEED? WHOEVER
IT IS, HE HAS INVITED
HIS OWN DEATH

ARJUNA RAISED HIS BOW AND LOOKED AROUND

THERE IS
NO ONE IN SIGHT.
BEFORE I GO IN
SEARCH OF THE
MURDERER, I'D
BETTER QUENCH
MY THIRST.

WHEN HE WAS ABOUT TO DRINK THE COOL WATER

NO, ARJUNA, DON'T!
NOT IF YOU WANT TO
LIVE. YOU WILL FIRST
ANSWER MY QUESTIONS

ARJUNA WAS ENRAGED.

WILL I ? O COWARD,
APPEAR BEFORE ME,
IF YOU DARE, AND
THEN LAY YOUR
CONDITIONS.



WHEN HIS TAUNT DID NOT SEEM TO HAVE
ANY EFFECT, ARJUNA RAISED HIS BOW AND
SHOT IN THE DIRECTION OF THE VOICE.



YOUR ARROWS CANNOT
HARM ME, ARJUNA!
WHY DON'T YOU
ANSWER MY
QUESTIONS?



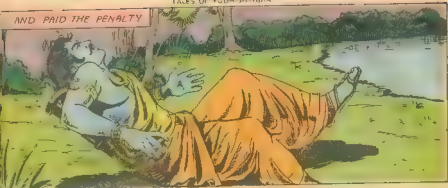
I WILL! WITH MORE
EFFECTIVE WEAPONS, BUT
NOT BEFORE I DRINK SOME
WATER FROM THIS LAKE.



ARJUNA TOO DISREGARDED THE WARNING



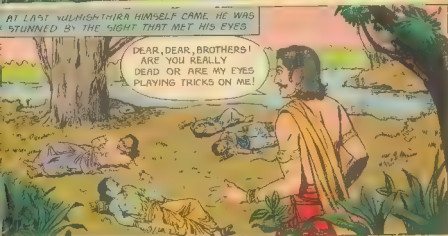
AND PAID THE PENALTY

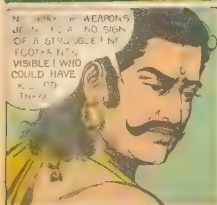
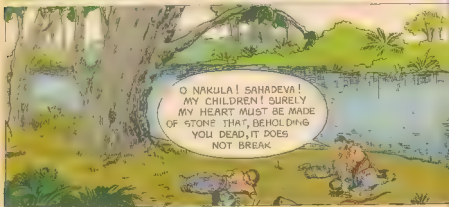


THEN CAME BHIMA, THE SECOND PANDAVA WHEN HE SAW HIS BROTHERS LYING DEAD NEAR THE LAKE



AT LAST YUDHISHTHIRA HIMSELF CAME. HE WAS STUNNED BY THE SIGHT THAT MET HIS EYES





A VOICE STOPPED HIM

I AM THE CRANE WHO OWNS THIS LAKE. IF YOU DRINK WITHOUT FIRST ANSWERING MY QUESTIONS YOU, TOO, WILL DIE LIKE YOUR RASH BROTHERS.

YOU, WHO HAVE KILLED THOSE WHO COULD NOT BE OVERCOME EITHER BY THE DEVAS OR THE ASURAS, CANNOT BE AN ORDINARY BIRD. TELL ME WHO YOU REALLY ARE

THE NEXT MOMENT -

AM A YAKSHA
IF YOU ANSWER MY
QUESTIONS, YOU MAY
DRINK AT MY LAKE

O YAKSHA, ASK
YOUR QUESTIONS
I SHALL TRY TO
ANSWER THEM



THEN HERE IS THE
FIRST ONE. WHAT MAKES
ONE A BRAHMAN—
BIRTH, CONDUCT OR
LEARNING?

IT'S BEHAVIOUR THAT
MAKES ONE A BRAHMAN

WHAT IS IT THAT CAUSES
CEASELESS WONDER?

DAY AFTER DAY,
COUNTLESS PEOPLE DIE.
YET, THE LIVING
WISH TO LIVE
FOREVER. WHAT
COULD BE MORE
EXTRAORDINARY?

HOW DO YOU BECOME
RICH? HOW DO
YOU BECOME HAPPY?

IF YOU ABANDON LUST,
YOU WILL BE RICH
IF YOU ABANDON DESIRE,
YOU WILL BE HAPPY

AT LAST —

YOUR ANSWERS PLEASE ME, ONE OF YOUR BROTHERS CAN NOW COME BACK TO LIFE. WHICH ONE DO YOU WANT?

NAKULA, MY LORD.

THE YAKSHA WAS SURPRISED.

WHY NAKULA? WHY NOT MIGHTY BHIMA OR VALIANT ARJUNA? ONE OF THEM WOULD BE MORE USEFUL TO YOU WHEN YOU TRY TO REGAIN YOUR KINGDOM!

BESIDES, BHIMA AND ARJUNA ARE YOUR OWN BROTHERS. NAKULA IS ONLY YOUR STEP-BROTHER. WHY DO YOU CHOOSE HIM?

MY FATHER HAD TWO WIVES — KUNTI AND MADRI. I, A SON OF KUNTI, AM ALIVE. LET A SON OF MADRI TOO LIVE. LORD, LET NAKULA COME TO LIFE



I AM PLEASED
WITH YOUR
RIGHTEDNESS
ALL YOUR BROTHERS
SHALL COME TO
- FE



AND LO! THEY DID!

MY LORD, YOU CANNOT
BE A YAKSHA YOU MUST
BE A DEVA* PLEASE
REVEAL YOURSELF



THE NEXT MOMENT THE YAKSHA
VANISHED AND IN HIS PLACE
STOOD YAMA*, THE LORD OF
DEATH, BY WHOSE GRACE
YUDHISHTHIRA HAD BEEN
BORN TO KUNTI*

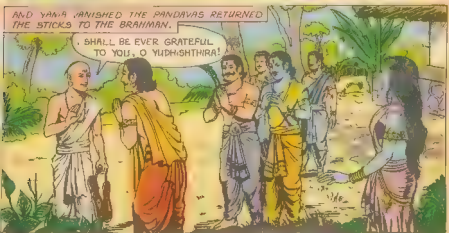
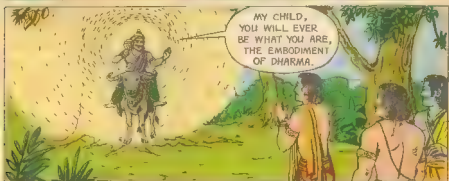
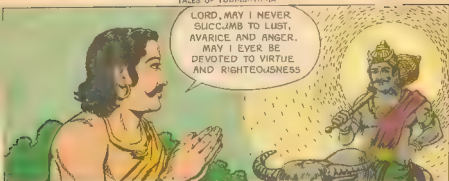
I AM YAMA.
I WANTED TO
TEST YOU SO, IN THE
FORM OF A DEER,
TOOK AWAY THE
BRAHMAN'S STICKS
TO DRAW YOU TO
THIS SPOT.



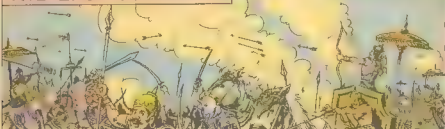
YAMA THEN GAVE YUDHISHTHIRA
THE STICK*

YOU WILL COMPLETE THE
REMAINING YEAR OF YOUR
EXILE SUCCESSFULLY.
YOU MAY NOW ASK FOR
ANOTHER BOON.





THE LAST COMPANION



WHEN THE THIRTEEN YEARS OF EXILE WERE OVER, YUDHISHTHIRA ASKED FOR A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT WITH THE KURUVAS BUT DURYODHANA REPLIED WITH A CRY FOR WAR. MANY WERE THE BRAVE WARRIORS THAT WERE SLAIN ON EITHER SIDE, BEFORE THE PANDAVAS FINALLY WON THE WAR.

IN SPITE OF THE VICTORY, YUDHISHTHIRA WAS SAD.



THE KINGDOM IS OURS, BUT AT WHAT COST? ALMOST ALL OUR DEAR KINSMEN ARE SLAIN. I SHALL RENOUNCE THE WORLD AND BECOME AN ASCETIC.

THE COURT ELDERS, HOWEVER, PERSUADED YUDHISHTHIRA THAT HE HAD ONLY FULFILLED HIS DUTY. SO HE FINALLY AGREED TO ASCEND THE THRONE NEEDLESS TO SAY, HE MADE A PERFECT KING.



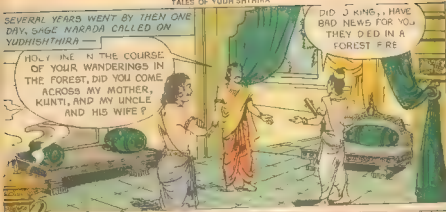
OUR KING IS JUST, GENEROUS AND COMPASSIONATE.

MAY GOD BLESS HIM!

SEVERAL YEARS WENT BY THEN ONE DAY, SAGE NARADA CALLED ON YUDHISHTHIRA —

HOLY ONE IN THE COURSE OF YOUR WANDERINGS IN THE FOREST, DID YOU COME ACROSS MY MOTHER, KUNTI, AND MY UNCLE AND HIS WIFE ?

DID J KING,, HAVE BAD NEWS FOR YOU THEY DIED IN A FOREST FIRE



YUDHISHTHIRA HAD HARDLY RECOVERED FROM HIS GRIEF WHEN A MESSENGER ARRIVED FROM DWARAKA

MY LORD, THE YADAVAS ARE ALL DEAD ! THEY KILLED ONE ANOTHER IN A DRUNKEN BRAWL ! AND LORD KRISHNA, TOO, HAS LEFT THIS WORLD.

KRISHNA GONE !

NO !



I FEEL THE TIME HAS COME FOR US TO LEAVE THIS EARTH AND SEEK HEAVEN

WE FEEL THE SAME

SO YUDHISHTHIRA INSTALLED
PAREEKSHIT, THE
SON OF ABHIMANYU
ON THE THRONE



AND LED DRAUPADI AND HIS BROTHERS OUT OF HASTINAPURA AS THE CITIZENS
STOOD OUTSIDE THE CITY, WATCHING THEIR BELOVED KING AND THE BRAVE
PANDAVAS DEPART, A STRAY DOG APPEARED ON THE SCENE



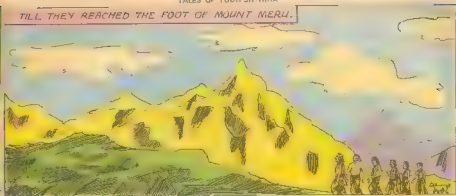
IT FOLLOWED THE LITTLE GROUP
ON THEIR TREK TO HEAVEN.



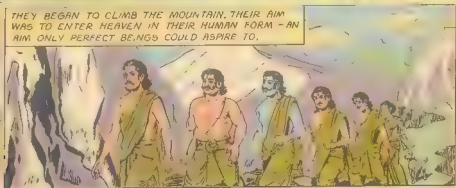
HAVING CROSSED MOUNT HIMAVAT, THEY
WALKED THROUGH THE GREAT DESERT
BEYOND IT...



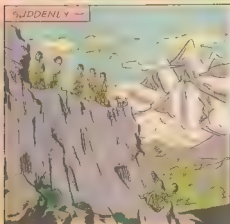
TILL THEY REACHED THE FOOT OF MOUNT MERU.



THEY BEGAN TO CLIMB THE MOUNTAIN. THEIR AIM WAS TO ENTER HEAVEN IN THEIR HUMAN FORM - AN AIM ONLY PERFECT BEINGS COULD ASPIRE TO.

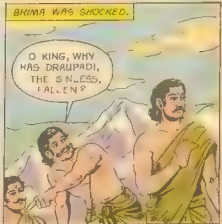


SUDDENLY —



BHIMA WAS SHOCKED.

O KING, WHY HAS DRAUPADI, THE SENSELESS, FALLEN?



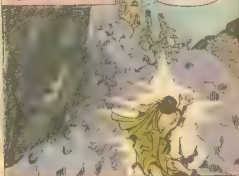
YUDHISHTHIRA ANSWERED WITHOUT TURNING BACK.

SHE WAS PARTIAL TO ARJUNA.



SAHADEVA WAS THE NEXT TO FALL.

HE LACKED HUMILITY.



WHEN NAKULA FOLLOWED SAHADEVA --

HE WAS TOO PROUD OF HIS HANDSOME FEATURES.



AS YUDHISHTHIRA PROCEEDED, FOLLOWED BY BHIMA AND ARJUNA, THE LITTLE DOG CONTINUED TO KEEP THEM COMPANY.



AFTER THEY HAD COVERED SOME DISTANCE --

ARJUNA

HIS VALOUR MADE HIM JAIN

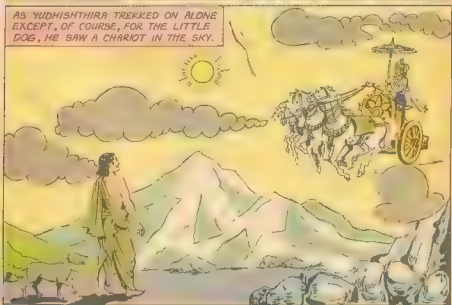


SUDDENLY BHIMA CRIED OUT

WAIT! , YOUR
DARLING, AM
FALLING. WHERE
DID I FAIL?



AS YUDHISHTHIRA TREKKED ON ALONE
EXCEPT, OF COURSE, FOR THE LITTLE
DOG, HE SAW A CHARIOT IN THE SKY.



THE NEXT MOMENT INDRA, THE LORD OF HEAVEN, STOOD BEFORE HIM.



COME, YUDHISHTHIRA,
I'LL TAKE YOU TO
HEAVEN. ASCEND
THIS CHARIOT.

I DO NOT WISH
TO GO TO HEAVEN
WITHOUT MY BROTHERS
AND OUR WIFE.

INDRA SMILED.

THEY HAVE ALREADY
REACHED HEAVEN,
BUT NOT IN THEIR
HUMAN FORMS
ASCEND THE
CHARIOT.

THIS DOG,
TOO, WILL GO
WITH ME



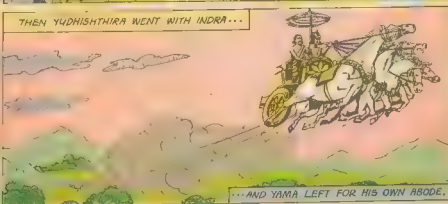
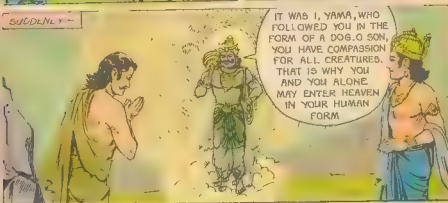
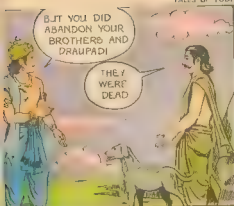
NO! NO! THERE
IS NO PLACE IN
HEAVEN FOR
A DOG.

NO PLACE FOR
THIS FAITHFUL
DOG? THEN I TOO
HAVE NO PLACE
THERE

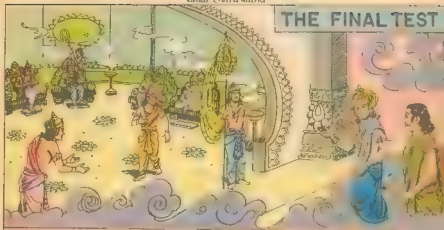
WILL YOU LOSE
HEAVEN FOR THE
SAKE OF AN
ANIMAL? FORSAKE
THE DOG.

CANNOT ABANDON
HIM HE HAS
FOLLOWED ME
DEVOTEDLY.





THE FINAL TEST



WHEN YUDHISHTHIRA ENTERED HEAVEN, HE WAS RECEIVED BY THE GODS AND THE SAGES HE WAS SURPRISED TO SEE DURYODHANA THERE

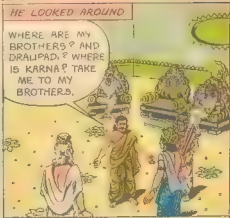
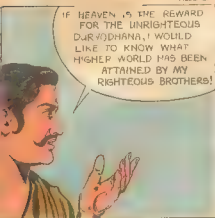
THIS IS OUTRAGEOUS!
DURYODHANA, HERE!
DURYODHANA, WHO WAS
RESPONSIBLE FOR THE
WAR — FOR THE
DESTRUCTION OF MEN
AND MORALITY! I WILL
NOT STAY HERE.



NARADA STEPPED FORWARD AND TRIED TO PACIFY HIM.

THIS IS HEAVEN. THERE
CAN BE NO ILL-WILL
HERE. DURYODHANA'S
HEROIC DEATH ON
THE BATTLEFIELD
HAS WON HIM A
PLACE IN HEAVEN





YUDHISHTHIRA FOLLOWED THE CELESTIAL MESSENGER, AS THEY WALKED ON, THE GENTLE GLOW OF HEAVEN GRADUALLY FADED...



...AND THEY WERE ENVELOPED IN BLINDING DARKNESS.



WITH EACH STEP THEY TOOK, THE MORE REVOLTING BECAME THE SCENES THAT MET THEIR EYES.



AS THEY WENT ON, A FOUL STENCH ALMOST SUFFOCATED YUDHISHTHIRA.

WHERE ARE WE? WHERE ARE MY BROTHERS? WHEN WILL WE LEAVE BEHIND THIS UNPLEASANT PATH AND MEET THEM?



THE CELESTIAL MESSENGER STOPPED.

I WAS TOLD TO LEAD YOU THIS FAR AND STOP.

IF YOU HAVE HAD ENOUGH, YOU MAY RETURN WITH ME.

DISGUSTED BY THE FOUL SMELL, YUDHISHTHIRA BEGAN TO RETRACE HIS STEPS. SUDDENLY—

WAIT! DON'T LEAVE US!

YOUR PURE PRESENCE BRINGS US COMFORT.

PLEASE DO NOT GO BACK.

AS LONG AS YOU ARE HERE, WE DO NOT FEEL THE TORTURES INFLICTED UPON US.

WHO ARE YOU?

I'M BHIMA.

I'M NAKULA.

I'M SAHADEVA.

I'M KARNA.

I'M ARJUNA.

I'M DRAUPADI.

YUDHISHTHIRA WAS BEWILDERED.

AM I ASLEEP OR
AWAKE? OR HAVE
I GONE MAD?

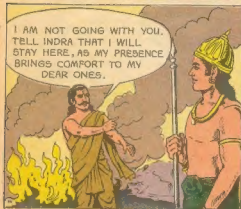


THEN HE BECAME ANGRY.

DURYODHANA IN
HEAVEN! AND MY
BROTHERS IN HELL!
ARE THE GODS
BLIND? IS
DHARMA DEAD?



I AM NOT GOING WITH YOU.
TELL INDRA THAT I WILL
STAY HERE, AS MY PRESENCE
BRINGS COMFORT TO MY
DEAR ONES.



THE NEXT MOMENT, YUDHISHTHIRA
WAS BATHED IN DIVINE LIGHT.



INDRA AND OTHER DEITIES
APPEARED BEFORE HIM.

MY CHILD, FOR THE ONE LIE YOU SPOKE TO
HASTEN DRONA'S END*, YOU WERE EXPOSED TO
HELL FOR A SECOND. YOUR BROTHERS HAD TO
SUFFER HELL FOR A SHORT DURATION, FOR THE
FAULTS YOU YOURSELF
WERE AWARE OF.
THEY ARE NOW
IN HEAVEN.



THOSE WHOSE MERITS FAR EXCEED THEIR SINS, EXPERIENCE HELL FIRST FOR A SHORT WHILE AND THEN GO TO HEAVEN.



THEN YAMA ADDRESSED YUDHISHTHIRA.

CHILD, THIS WAS YOUR THIRD TEST. YOU WOULD RATHER STAY IN HELL FOR THE SAKE OF YOUR BROTHERS. YOU ARE COMPASSIONATE, RIGHTEOUS AND SINLESS.



YUDHISHTHIRA BOWED TO YAMA.

FATHER, IT WAS YOU WHO GAVE ME STRENGTH TO TREAD THE RIGHTEOUS PATH. I BOW TO YOU.



HE THEN HAD A DIP IN THE CELESTIAL GANGA AND ASSUMED A DIVINE FORM.



HE WAS THEN ESCORTED BY INDRA AND YAMA TO HEAVEN, WHERE HE WAS REUNITED WITH HIS BROTHERS.

